GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4627
ANSWERED ON:09.05.2007
PERMISSIONS FOR RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons who were granted permissions to go abroad for religious pilgrimages during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise;

(b) the names of the countries for which permissions were granted for undertaking such pilgrimage; and

(c) the details of the grant provided and taxes collected annually during the last three years?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA)

(a)-(b) Government's permission is not required for Indian citizens to go abroad for religious pilgrimage. The Government are assisting/facilitating pilgrimages for Haj to Saudi Arabia, Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in China and pilgrimages to Sikh Gurudwaras and Hindu Temples in Pakistan.

In case of Haj pilgrimage, Saudi Arabia fixes an annual quota for pilgrims from different countries to perform Haj. The persons going for Haj to Saudi Arabia through the Central Haj Committee (CHC) are provided a special document called the Pilgrim Pass (in lieu of Passport) which is valid for travel to Saudi Arabia only for Haj; those who go to Saudi Arabia for Haj through private tour operators travel on the basis of regular passports. The number of pilgrims who performed Haj through the Central Haj Committee, state-wise, during the last three years may be seen at Annexure-I.

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in China is conducted on the basis of regular passports. The number of pilgrims who performed this Yatra in the last three years is as follows:

Year	No. of Pilgrims
2004	537
2005	529
2006	592

(state-wise break-up is not collected)

The pilgrimages to Sikh Gurudwaras and Hindu Temples in Pakistan are also performed on the basis of regular passports. The number of pilgrims, who undertook this pilgrimage under Bilateral Protocol on visits to Religious Shrines in the last three years, state-wise, may be seen at Annexure-II.

The Government have been providing subsidy towards airfare for Haj pilgrims going through the Central Haj Committee to Mecca. The amount of subsidy in the last three years is as follows:

Year	Subsidy (in Rupees crores)
2004	160.70
2005	179.66
2006	280.00

Figures are provisional

(c) The Government of India have not imposed any tax on such pilgrimages. The Governments of Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan do not charge any taxes from the pilgrims going for the above pilgrimages.